

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SCS-03

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FM USMISSION BERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2285

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

S E C R E T BERLIN 1451

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, WB, UR, GE

SUBJECT: REPORTED ESCAPE ATTEMPT IN US UNIFORMS

REF: A. STATE 166926

B. BERLIN 1340

C. BERLIN 1344

1. SUBSEQUENT TO DELIVERY OF ORAL STATEMENT AUGUST 6 (REFTELS B AND C), MISSION PROTOCOL OFFICER TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF SEVERAL FURTHER MEETINGS WITH ROMANOVSKIY, ON OTHER BUSINESS, TO INQUIRE WHETHER SOVIETS HAD RECEIVED ANY INFORMATION FROM EAST GERMAN OR OTHER SOURCES ON REPORTED DETENTION OF US CIVILIAN AND TWO PERSONS IN US MILITARY UNIFORMS. ON BOTH AUGUST 8 AND 10, ROMANOVSKIY RESPONDED THAT MATTER HAD BEEN RAISED WITH "PROPER AUTHORITIES" AS REQUESTED, BUT THAT LATTER HAD PROFESSED TO HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF CASE. AUGUST 15, ON INSTRUCTIONS, MISSION PROTOCOL OFFICER REPEATED REQUEST FOR INVESTIGATION AS CONTAINED IN AUGUST 6 STATEMENT (REFTEL B). ROMANOVSKIY STATED THAT EAST GERMAN AUTHORITIES HAD INFORMED HIM THEY KNEW NOTHING OF INCIDENT, AND THAT HE COULD THEREFORE SEE LITTLE PURPOSE IN PURSUING MATTER FURTHER. FINALLY, IN COURSE OF LUNCHEON AUGUST 21, MISSION PROTOCOL OFFICER INQUIRED ONCE AGAIN AS TO WHETHER INVESTIGATION HAD YIELDED

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ANYTHING, RECEIVING AS BEFORE A NEGATIVE RESPONSE.

2. WHILE WE STILL ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT REPORTED INCIDENT WAS ATTEMPTED ESCAPE BY PERSONS USING PROCURED UNIFORMS, WE STILL BELIEVE THAT IMPORTANT QUESTION OF PRINCIPLE IS AT STAKE HERE, NAMELY, IT IS INCUMBENT UPON SOVIETS TO INFORM US WHENEVER UNIFORMED ALLIED PERSONNEL ARE DETAINED IN EAST BERLIN AND TO PRESENT REASONS FOR DETENTION- EVEN IN CASE SUCH AS PRESENT ONE WHERE DETENTION MAY BE QUITE JUSTIFIABLE. POSSIBLE DETENTION OF STEINER NATURALLY DOES NOT BRING INTO QUESTION SAME PRINCIPLE OF UNRESTRICTED ALLIED ACCESS, AND OUR INVOLVEMENT, PRESUMABLY, WOULD BE LIMITED TO PROVIDING AS FAR AS POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE NORMALLY PROVIDED US CITIZENS IN TROUBLE ABROAD. WE MIGHT ADD THAT WE HAVE NO DEFINITIVE PROOF THAT IT IS IN FACT STEINER WHO IS UNDER DETENTION, SINCE ONLY EVIDENCE WE HAVE IS DESCRIPTION PROVIDED BY CANADIAN TOURIST THAT APPEARED TO MATCH STEINER'S.

3. MISSION WILL CONTINUE TO MAKE INQUIRES WITH SOVIETS IN PROTOCOL CHANNEL AS OPPORTUNITIES ARISE. SHOULD THESE PRODUCE NO SATISFACTORY RESULTS AND QUESTION OF STEINER'S WHEREABOUTS REMAIN UNRESOLVED (WE ARE MAKING EFFORTS TO DETERMINE WHETHER HE IS IN OR HAS RETURNED TO WEST BERLIN), WE WILL RAISE FOR CONSIDERATION THE POSSIBILITY OF MOVING THE ISSUE A NOTCH HIGHER.

4. AT AUGUST 21 LUNCHEON MENTIONED ABOVE, ROMANOVSKIY PROVIDED RESPONSE TO SECOND REQUEST MADE IN AUGUST 6 STATEMENT, NAMELY, TO INVESTIGATE REPORTED SERIOUS INJURY OF US TOURIST ON AUTOBAHN. US CITIZEN AND WIFE IN RENTED CAR WERE IN FACT ONLY SLIGHTLY INJURED IN ACCIDENT NEAR MARIENBORN AUGUST 4, AND WERE ALLOWED TO DEPART GDR FOLLOWING DAY, DESPITE FACT THAT TWO OF OCCUPANTS OF EAST GERMAN CAR INVOLVED IN ACCIDENT WERE SERIOUSLY INJURED AND A THIRD ONE KILLED. ACCIDENT WAS ATTRIBUTED TO MALFUNCTION OF RENTED CAR RATHER THAN TO NEGLIGENCE. KLEIN

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